

# **Exhibit 12**

Declaration of Eric Rassbach

## Rights and responsibilities related to free expression

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 [newsroom.ucla.edu/rights-and-responsibilities-related-to-free-expression](https://newsroom.ucla.edu/rights-and-responsibilities-related-to-free-expression)

UCLA

Dear Bruin Community:

Echoing [Chancellor Block's welcome message](#) last week, we wish to express our high hopes that the new academic year will be one of learning and growth for Bruins across our institution.

In a vibrant and diverse community such as this one, much of that learning and growth will come from engagement with viewpoints different from our own and ideas we may not readily understand. Our minds are stimulated and stretched when we grapple with new concepts, new perspectives, new questions and new ways of thinking. While this can be uncomfortable, it is also what helps us consider fresh ways of looking at an issue, refine our positions and develop our worldview. Ultimately, this process advances truth and understanding.

It is for these reasons that we lift up the free expression of ideas as fundamental to our academic mission. Aside from an institutional value, it is also a right: As a public university, UCLA is barred by the Constitution from prohibiting speech or other forms of expression based on the viewpoint of the speaker. The right to freedom of speech secured by the First Amendment is held by students, faculty and staff as well as visitors who are invited to speak at UCLA by registered campus organizations, academic departments and the like. UCLA is bound by the First Amendment even in cases in which the speaker may present offensive or hateful ideas.

In such cases, to be sure, UCLA's commitment to freedom of expression may sit uneasily beside our commitments to equity, diversity and inclusion. This can create tension — or even distress — when one person's speech causes concern or deeply offends another person or group.

UCLA's [Principles of Community \(PDF\)](#) and our [True Bruin Values](#) exist to help create the conditions that enable Bruins to engage across difference while maintaining a culture of respect. They remind us that while we can and should debate ideas — and we certainly will, especially as we gear up for the U.S. presidential race in 2024 — we must never attack one another's fundamental humanity. They ask us to embrace the aim of a university education and rely on facts, evidence, reason and principled, respectful discourse in all our discussions and debates.

These values are modeled in UCLA's Dialogue Across Difference initiative, which you will be hearing more about this fall, and which will bring Bruins of all kinds together for public events, trainings, workshops and programs inside and outside of the classroom.

People in a diverse community like ours will never agree on everything — nor should we. But agreeing on how to disagree is still important. Agreeing to debate ideas instead of trading insults, to seeing one another with empathy and curiosity rather than hostility or contempt, to trying to engage rather than just enrage — all of this can help us conduct healthy debates where passion and compassion co-exist.

If we approach one another with respect and empathy as a foundation, our discussions and disagreements will not create rifts; they will help us grow as people and advance knowledge and truth.

Sincerely,

**Darnell Hunt**

Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost

**Monroe Gorden, Jr.**

Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs

**Mitchell Chang**

Interim Vice Provost for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion